DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 364 104 FL 021 682

AUTHOR Cai, Guanjun
TITLE Beyond "Bad Writing": Teaching English Composition to Chinese ESL Students.
PUB DATE Apr 93
NOTE 24p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (44th, San Diego, CA, March 31-April 3, 1993).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Chinese; College Students; *Cultural Context; *Cultural Influences; Discourse Analysis; *English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Second Language Instruction; *Writing (Composition); *Writing Instruction; *Writing Processes
IDENTIFIERS *Chinese People

ABSTRACT

A discussion of English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) writing instruction focuses on cultural factors that influence Chinese students' composition and that may be misconstrued as poor writing techniques. It is argued that the different rhetorical conventions that ESL students incorporate into their English writing are based in the deeper and broader social, political, and ideological beliefs and values of their native culture, and that in evaluating this writing, teachers must look at these underlying factors. A review of the history of Chinese literature and analysis of centuries-old essays whose prescribed structure has influenced writing illustrate the source of certain discourse conventions. These and other organizational patterns commonly found in Chinese students' compositions are contrasted with English discourse structure. Among these are a four-part organizational pattern construed as longwindedness, patterns for paragraph organization, avoidance of self-expression, and preference for an indirect approach to a given topic. The primary implications for classroom ESL composition instruction are that: discourse strategies in English must be taught, not assumed; and Chinese students should be taught English discursive and sociocultural ideologies through writing and evaluation. Sample Chinese essays and a brief bibliography are appended. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Guanjun Cai
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED 364 104

Beyond "Bad Writing": Teaching English Composition to Chinese ESL Students

Guanjun Cai
The University of Arizona

During the past two decades, there has been substantial growth in interest in the analysis of both spoken and written discourse of various types in second languages. To a large extent, emphasis has been given to the analysis of the similarities and differences between final texts by ESL students and native speakers of English in terms of organizational patterns, genre preferences, and sentence and other grammatical structures. Research findings reveal that cultural-specific thought patterns exert an overwhelming influence over students' rhetorical habits. But, little has been done to explain why and how cultural thought patterns constitute the rhetorical habits which students bring into their writing in second languages. Moreover, not much has been done to introduce these findings to second language writing classrooms. As a possible consequence of this failure, classroom teachers still reportedly tend to see English writing by, say, Chinese ESL students in "regular" classrooms as inadequate and characterize these students as "poor writers" because of, for example, the "indirectness," "digressions," "loosely-developed topics," and "lack of transitional signals" in their writing. Such judgments, which are merely based on some of the surface, textual features in writing by Chinese ESL students, however, appear irresponsible and misleading.

I strongly believe that the different rhetorical conventions that ESL students incorporate into their English writing are situated in the deeper and broader social, political, ideological beliefs and values that these students gained from their native cultures. The purpose of this paper is to argue that, when evaluating English compositions by Chinese ESL students, teachers should try to detach themselves from textual features and look into the underlying factors that influence and shape students' thinking and writing; that is, they should go beyond the rhetorical conventions to investigate how the sociopolitical ideologies and cultural values held by Chinese ESL students shape their ESL writing. Through examining sample published essays, I will discuss how Chinese rhetoric, especially academic discourse, has been bound

FL021682

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

up with social, political, and ideological values in Chinese culture. Then, through analyzing writing samples by Chinese ESL students, I will demonstrate what aspects of Chinese discourse strategies Chinese ESL students may possibly bring into their English writing. Finally, I will suggest methods for teaching English composition to Chinese ESL students based on schema theory and writing-as-process theory.

Cultural, Sociopolitical Ideologies in Rhetoric and Composition

Composition theory and pedagogy have long given up their traditional view of writing as that of a writer, sitting there alone and staying outside of any social context, producing a text by depending on some rhetorical strategies and compositional skills; they have come to recognize that writing involves some complex intellectual and psychological processes in which the writer also negotiates with the reader and the subject matter and in which the writer's thinking is shaped by the immediate social context. As Marilyn Cooper argues, "language and texts are not simply the means by which individuals discover and communicate information, but are essentially social activities, dependent on social structures and processes not only in their interpretive but also in their constructive phases" (quoted by LeFevre 9).

The idea of writing taking place in a social context is advanced by Karen LeFevre in her Invention as a Social Act. LeFevre proposes that writing is socially constructed. She argues this perspective of composing from several aspects. According to LeFevre, even though the writer usually appears to be an independent individual, "the inventing 'self' is socially influenced, even socially constituted" (33) because, first of all, "the language or other symbol systems the single writer works with are socially created and shared by members of discourse communities" (34); secondly, the writer composes "on a foundation of knowledge accumulated from previous generations, knowledge that constitutes a social legacy of ideas, forms, and ways of thinking" (34); thirdly, writing is substantially influenced by "social collectives, such as institutions, governments, and 'invisible colleges' of academic disciplinary communities" (34); and finally, the evaluation and actual use of what is composed also largely depends on the social context of its invention (35).

Many factors constitute the social context within which an individual writer works and in which writing is molded. Among them are the cultural and sociopolitical ideologies. The concept of ideology has been in flux and dispute. According to Terry Eagleton, the term "ideology" has a whole range of functional meanings, not all of which are compatible with each other. Here are a few definitions of ideology listed by Eagleton which are currently in circulation:

> (1) the process of production of meanings;
>
> (2) a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class;
>
> (3) ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power;
>
> (4) the conjuncture of discourse and power;
>
> (5) the process whereby social life is converted to a natural reality. (1-2)

Despite its variety of meaning, the term ideology seems to make reference not only to values, belief systems of society, and questions of political power, but also to actual uses of language, formation of discourse and thought. It also seems natural or universal that ideology tends to serve the needs of the politically dominant group, its belief systems, and its discursive thinking, while providing cohesion to disenfranchised groups. In this sense, "ideology is a function of the relation of an utterance to its social context" (Eagleton 9).

The intimate relationship of cultural and sociopolitical ideology to rhetoric and composition has also received attention from James Berlin. In "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class," Berlin asserts that "a rhetoric can never be innocent, can never be a disinterested arbiter of the ideological claims of others because it is always already serving certain ideological claims" (477). In other words, instead of being a means by which different ideologies compete for dominance, rhetoric is considered as inherently ideological.

The ideological nature of rhetoric and composition is further explored by Eagleton in greater depth. According to Eagleton, the formation of a discourse is a process in which rules for a certain type of writing are set, such as what can and must be said according to certain rules of social life. He claims that such a process is "embedded in turn in an ideological formation" (195).

Further, the process of discourse ideologizing is under social control, and usually the politically powerful ideology takes such control by, for example, setting rhetorical conventions, discourse strategies, and discourse expectations.

The ideological claims of rhetoric and composition are further reflected in changes in language use. As Muriel Saville-Troike states, "major changes in categories in the social structure, as in social revolutions, usually entail change in communicative patterns as well" (36). Specifically, she attributes some changes in language use to the changing of ruling ideologies. She illustrates her observation with changes in the patterns of address terminology in mainland China and Taiwan after the revolution in 1949. Since mainland China adopted Marxist social ideology, holding that every individual is an equal social entity and shares the same social goal, people addressed each other as tongzhi ("comrade") to symbolize that they share the same ideological position, regardless of their age and gender. People in Taiwan continued to address each other as xiansheng ("Mr.") and nushi or xiaojie ("Mrs." or "Miss"), which are considered unacceptable personal titles in the mainland because they are regarded as reflecting the capitalist ideology of elitism and deliberate class stratification.

Ideology and Written Academic Discourse in Chinese Culture

The observations of Eagleton, Berlin, and Saville-Troike are extremely true of the relation of rhetoric and composition to ideology throughout Chinese intellectual history. The theory and pedagogy of Chinese written academic discourse has always been bound up with political beliefs and ideological values. Inevitably, the rhetorical patterns, strategies, and expectations of written discourse have been conditioned by the politically dominant ideologies.

The prevailing social and political ideologies in Chinese culture are social stability and harmony, and political distatorship, all of which are derived from the revenated sage Confucius and his philosophy in the ancient time. The essence of Confucian thinking and teaching lies in his principles of ren, or benevolence, and of li, or propriety of behavior and loyalty to the best social traditions. The primary goal of ren and li is to help manage basic

human relationships, establish social harmony, and eventually ensure the dictatorship of the ruling class.

Individuals are responsible for maintaining social harmony. However, individual obligation to social harmony and group values do not recognize the importance of individuality. Rather, individuality is suppressed due to the hierarchical nature of Chinese society. Only some key individuals, such as emperors and ministers, are in the position of speaking and making social policies. Self-expression of others is believed to cause conflict, dissension, or even catastrophe, which may eventually be harmful to both the speaking individuals and social harmony. Therefore, it is widely accepted: "For the sake of safety, do not speak about policies when you are not in the position to make them" (an old Chinese saying). If one has to express personal views, he or she has to use politeness strategies on the base of compromise, adjustment, and prescribed etiquette.

Under this ruling ideology, rhetoric has become an appendage to politics and its ideological claims. This can be seen in the advents of the eight-legged essay, the four-part essay, and the three-foot monster essay. The eight-legged essay is known in Chinese as ba gu wen, meaning an essay of eight parts (see Example #1 in Appendix). It was first invented as a part of the Chinese civil service examinations[1] during the Ming (1368--1644) and Qing (1645--1911) dynasties and used by the Chinese ruling class to recruit local officials and to ensure its dictatorship; it thus constituted the main form of academic discourse in ancient China, and its influence continues to be strongly felt beyond geographical boundaries; that is, its influence continues to be felt in the Chinese discourse communities in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and particularly China.

An eight-legged essay must have the designated eight parts: poti, chengti, qijiang, qigu, xugu, zhonggu, hougu, and dajie, literally meaning the opening-up, amplification, prelimilary exposition, first point, second point,

---

[1]This civil system was invented in the Warring States Period (475 BC.-221 BC.), officially implemented in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD.), and fully developed during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1645-1911) dynasties. It consisted of three basic parts: the examination, the appointment, and the evaluation (Zhang 43). It was the examination part that required the eight-legged writing.

third point, final point, and conclusion. The most important part is the "amplification" usually consisting of two or three sentences, in which the writer introduced the chosen topic and clearly expresses the intended thesis of the essay. In the next six parts the writer elaborated on the topic for ten to twenty sentences. Then, the writer concluded the essay in two to four sentences. In addition, every part must be carefully balanced through using rhymed words, paired phrases, and matched length of sentences. In order to be government officials, each individual candidate had to display his mastery of social principles such as ren and li by writing a well-structured eight-legged essay.

All topics for eight-legged essays came exclusively from such Chinese classics as the Four Books and the Five Classics, which convey the thinkings and teachings of Confucius. Since plainly expressing a personal view may be offensive to the rulers, the writers usually just paraphrased in the entire essay what the sage said. Further, writers, like speakers, had to express themselves in accordance with certain prescribed expression models and styles. Books like Li-Ji (The Book of Etiquette) were written to inform people what to say and how to say it in every normally encountered situation (Oliver 150). In order to be not offensive, the writers of the eight-legged essay also used fixed phrases. For example, if choosing a topic such as praising the virtue and benevolence of the ruler, the writer usually compared the ruler to sages of the past ages, saying "If the wisest man is Confucius, the greatest man is doubtlessly my beloved emperor" (Wang 30).

As it was intended, the rigid structure of such essay writing tested the writer's loyalty to and tolerance of the imposition of tyranny. On the other hand, the required topics, the restriction on the expression of personal views on the topic, and the use of ritual language, all tested the writer's willingness to accept the traditional norms set by the sages and rulers to maintain social harmony and political.

The eight-legged essay was reformed twice because of the change in the dominant power groups and their guiding sociopolitical ideologies. The first

reform took place during the New Cultural Movement[2] in the early part of this century. As a result, expository and persuasive writing came to follow the qi-cheng-jun-he four-part organizational pattern (Zhang 87), which literarily means the introduction, the elaboration on the topic, the transition to another seemingly unrelated point, and the summing-up (see Example #2 in Appendix)

This four-part essay was what former Chairman Mao regarded as the "Party eight-legged essay" and called for the second reform in the 1950s. Mao accused the Party eight-legged writing of "its endless pages with empty verbiage," "its shooting at random without considering the audience," "its drab language," and "its poor arrangement of materials" ("Party Writing" 57-60). More importantly, he believed that the eight-legged essay failed to "convey the revolutionary ideologies to the people" (63) and that its further spread would wreck the country and ruin the revolutionary victory.

In response to Mao's call, students were taught to organize their writing in what I call the "three-foot monster pattern"[3] which started with a part of generalization, then proceeded to a part of elaboration, and ended with a part of speculation. As Example #3 illustrates (see Appendix), the writer starts the essay by making a very general statement about the topic to prepare the reader for it. Then, the writer goes on to elaborate on the topic by briefly examining two examples. Finally, the writer concludes by telling the reader that greater progress will be achieved if the workers and staff study Mao's thoughts and use them as guiding ideology in their work.

The change in sociopolitical ideologies and the associated change in discourse organization patterns, however, did not promise any change in the freedom of self-expression. This was true during the New Cultural

---

[2]After the failure of the 1911 Revolution, radical, patriotic intellectuals like Liang Qichao, Hu Shi, and Lu Xun, turned to the West for solutions to China's social problems. They passionately proposed to import Western ideas of ethics, politics, ideology, and culture in general by totally destroying Chinese traditions. That is, they rebelled against the Confucian canons of cultural and political ideologies as being the vehicle for the exposition of moral principles and came to appreciate Western ideological ideas that primarily aimed to express human needs and emotions.

[3]After I coined this phrase, I found out that it parallels what Clyde Moneyhun and John Scenters-Zapico have called the "five-paragraph monster" in American written academic discourse.

movement, which can be seen from the following passage in Yuan Yen's "On Learning":

> Basically no difference exists between a sage's mind and the minds of all others. The difference lies in the fact that while an ordinary person places the individual "I" above the collective "we," thus confusing the important with the comparatively insignificant and, furthermore, blocking the communication between the individual "I" and the collective "we," a sage does exactly the opposite. (325)

Obviously, the "I" was still not important and should be subject to the "we," and the individual to social groups and society; personal opinion was not encouraged if not suppressed, and communication was expected to go one-way, from the ruler to the ruled; to do otherwise or especially the opposite would jeopardize personal relationships and social harmony.

The same was true with regard to written academic discourse in the days of Mao and after. Even though Mao changed his slogan on freedom of speech from "the more educated, the more reactionary" in the early of 1950s to "Let a hundred flowers blossom, let a hundred schools of thought contend" in the middle 1950s, free expression of personal views was in reality strictly restricted as he wrote: "What should our policy be toward non-Marxist ideas?" he said: "The matter is simple, we simply deprive them of their freedom of speech" ("Flowers" 410).

It should be apparent that Chinese academic discourse has always been situated within Chinese politics and ideology rather than the other way around. That is, rhetoric and composition in Chinese culture have never escaped the social, political, and ideological questions. Further, it has been an unconditional commitment of Chinese educators to make academic writing always available to serve the ideological claims and political stands of the dominant power.

Chinese Discourse Strategies and Ideologies in English Compositions by Chinese ESL Students

The existing research on Chinese ESL students' language behavior and their writing habits in particular has found evidence that Chinese ESL students tend to apply discourse strategies typical of Chinese academic

dsicourse and Chinese cultural and sociopolitical ideologies in their English compositions. Specifically, English compositions by Chinese ESL students have consistently shown evidence of use of either the eight-legged or the four-part or the three-foot organizational patterns, a restricted expression of personal feelings and views, an indirect approach to the chosen topic, and a preference for prescribed, formulaic language, all of which are so unfamiliar to native English-speaking instructors that they mistakenly perceive these students as "poor writers."

In "Contrastive Rhetoric: Teaching Composition to The Chinese Student," Kaplan presented four English essays written by Chinese ESL students in an American university to show "the insistence of the students on the rather rigid form" (12) of writing. By "the rather rigid form," Kaplan refers to the eight-legged organizational structure, "an alien one, one not familiar to [American] college professors in Sociology or History" and "a form which violates the expectations of the reader if he is a native speaker of English" (12). To Kaplan, because of their form and violation of the English reader's expectations, English compositions by Chinese students thus demonstrate "an inability to get to the point and stick with it" or lack "unity and coherence" (12). Or in Kaplan's words, the effect of Chinese students' writing in English is simply to "compound the obscurity by doing strange things with English verbs and with word order" (12).

In addition to the eight-legged format, other organizational patterns familiar to the Chinese discourse community are also present in the English compositions by Chinese ESL students. Example #4 (see Appendix) is an essay written by a Chinese ESL student for the Upper Division Writing Proficiency Exam in an American university, which illustrates the use of the qi-cheng-jun-he four-part model. As a matter of fact, the application of this four-part pattern is very common among Chinese ESL students. In investigating the rhetorical patterns of English and Chinese expository prose style, Fagan and Cheong analyzed sixty English compositions written by Chinese ESL ninth graders in Singapore. They found out that while all "the sixty students were influenced by Chinese rhetorical styles," 50.9% of them wrote their English compositions following "the Chinese four-part pattern of Introduction-Body-Subtheme-Conclusion," instead of "the English three-part pattern of

Introduction-Body-Conclusion" (27). Fagan and Cheong argue that it is the use of this four-part organizational pattern that causes the English compositions by Chinese students to be "characterized by longwindedness, digression, and indirectness" which are considered "problems" in writing when compared to the supposed "conciseness, brevity, and simplicity" encouraged by the English three-part pattern (25).

Research has also found evidence of transfer of topic development strategies typical of Chinese discourse expectations in the English compositions by Chinese ESL students. These strategies are the use of the qi-cheng-jun-he pattern for paragraph organization, the avoidance of self-expression, and the explicit preference for indirectness. Kaplan claims that a native speaker of English favor a direct approach to a chosen topic ("Thought Patterns" 6). In the sense of paragraph organization, this means that an English writer starts each paragraph in an expository essay with a topic sentence, and then, proceeds to support this topic by using methods of cause-effect, comparison and contrast, definition, and classification and cohesion devices. In other words, an English writer arranges a paragraph in a hierarchical order in which sentences are written either subordinate to or coordinate with the topic sentence (Fagan and Cheong 25).

However, Tsao has argued that Chinese ESL students often tend to construct their paragraphs in English using the qi-cheng-jun-he pattern (110), the same pattern used for organizing essays, as in the following example:

> [*qi*] We are dependent, for understanding and for consolation and hope, upon what we learn of ourselves from songs and stories. [*cheng*] From this statement, we can know that through songs and stories, people realize themselves, humanity, and their societies. The literacy--the mastery of language and the knowledge of books--is the essential factor that enlarges people's knowledge, and improves mutual realization of people, and then creates the smooth society. [*jun*] From kindergartens to colleges, from homes to offices, we learn how to interact with someone and how to realize ourselves and our societies. The literacy helps us to accustom and realize them. [*he*] Hence, "literacy is not an ornament, but a necessity."

The first sentence prepares the reader for the topic (qi); the second and third sentences introduce and elaborate on the topic (cheng); the fourth sentence

turns (jun) to another seemingly unrelated subtheme; and the final sentence concludes the paragraph with a summing-up (he). This type of paragraph organization exactly reflects Fan Shen's description of Chinese writing as piercing an onion, layer by layer, "moving from surface to the core" (462). Since cohesion devices and subordinate or coordinate relationships between sentences are not important in this type of paragraphing, English paragraphs by Chinese ESL students often receive such comments as: "lacking clear topic statement" and "the relationships between ideas not explicitly signaled" (Gregg 356) or "a lot of unnecessary wandering around the topic" (Kaplan "Grammar" 12).

The avoidance of free expression of personal views and feelings is perhaps the most discussed Chinese discourse strategy noted in English compositions by Chinese ESL students (Matalene; Tsao; Kaplan). For instance, Fagan and Cheong claim that a native speaker of English usually writes a paragraph with "forthright, straightforward, and simple expressions" and "generally free of sentimental expressions, exaggerations, and reference to the past," but an English paragraph by Chinese ESL students is often marked by "poetry, flowery, and florid styles, exaggerations, and use of quotations and reference to the past" (25). In the sense, Chinese writers' "extraordinary fondness for using quotations and allusion" is displayed in the following passage (emphasis added):

> *Confucius, the ancient Chinese philosopher, maintains that whatever your calling, "The first thing to do is to give everything a true and proper name."* Now, we have got a name, "tractors," it is true, a "A motor vehicle that pulls farm machinery," according to my Longman's dictionary. We should do now is to give every tractor a chance to live up to its expectations. I am nothing of a philosopher, but I have a dream that everyone of us is aware of this simple, pragmatical idea: *Call a spade a spade. Use a tractor as it should be used.* (Matalene 804-5)

In Chinese writing, quoting from and referring to the past is not only considered "the height of culture" and "the mark of good breeding" (Tsao 109), but also regarded as willingness to respect authorities and to accept traditional values, social norms, and group ideologies, and as a politeness strategy. Too much or too straightforward expression of personal views and thinking would "give people the impression of being disrespectful of the

Communist party in political writings and boastful in scholarly writings" (Shen 460). But unfortunately, too much quoting and referring to the past is considered to be in bad taste in English. Thus, an English paragraph by Chinese ESL students is seen as full of "frequent recourse to the pronouncements of authorities," "unacknowledged reproduction of key thought units," and "a flatly assertive, judgmental tone" (Gregg 356).

In addition to limited expression of personal feelings and thoughts, Chinese writers also often utilizes another distinctive rhetorical strategy, "suggesting" (Leki 95) or "indirectness" (Jensen 135). Instead of directly "imposing" his or her ideas on the reader, a Chinese writer tends to use the "rhetorical question," "metaphor and simile," "analogy," and "illustrative anecdotes" (Gregg 356) to reveal his or her intention. The following paragraph is one good example of this "indirect" approach:

> I am not an economic policy maker, but I have a dream of tractors singing in the fields and trucks roaring effortlessly on roads. I am not an agricultural technical program planner, but I have a dream of seeing farmers studying science and technology and working comfortably with machinery. (Matalene 804)

According to Matalene, the writer intended to criticize the inefficiency of the Chinese Department of Agriculture and its local officials. But instead of straightforwardly placing blame on the government, the writer displaced the criticism to the envisionment of what should be expected. In doing so, the writer implied his message to his readers. In Kaplan's words, this student was writing a "reader-responsible" paragraph; that is, the writer expects the reader to "supply some significant portion of the propositional structure" ("Notes" 291-92) and "to work to glean meaning [on their own]" (Leki 97) from the paragraph.

This "indirect" approach also involves the writer's use of prescribed language and accepted expressions, such as set phrases, as well as even clichés in the pursuit of avoiding conflict and of group values. Examples of these are seen in the following (emphasis and numbers added):

> (1) *Since the reformation of the educational system in 1977, the situation has completely changed.* Every middle school graduate and all young people under the age

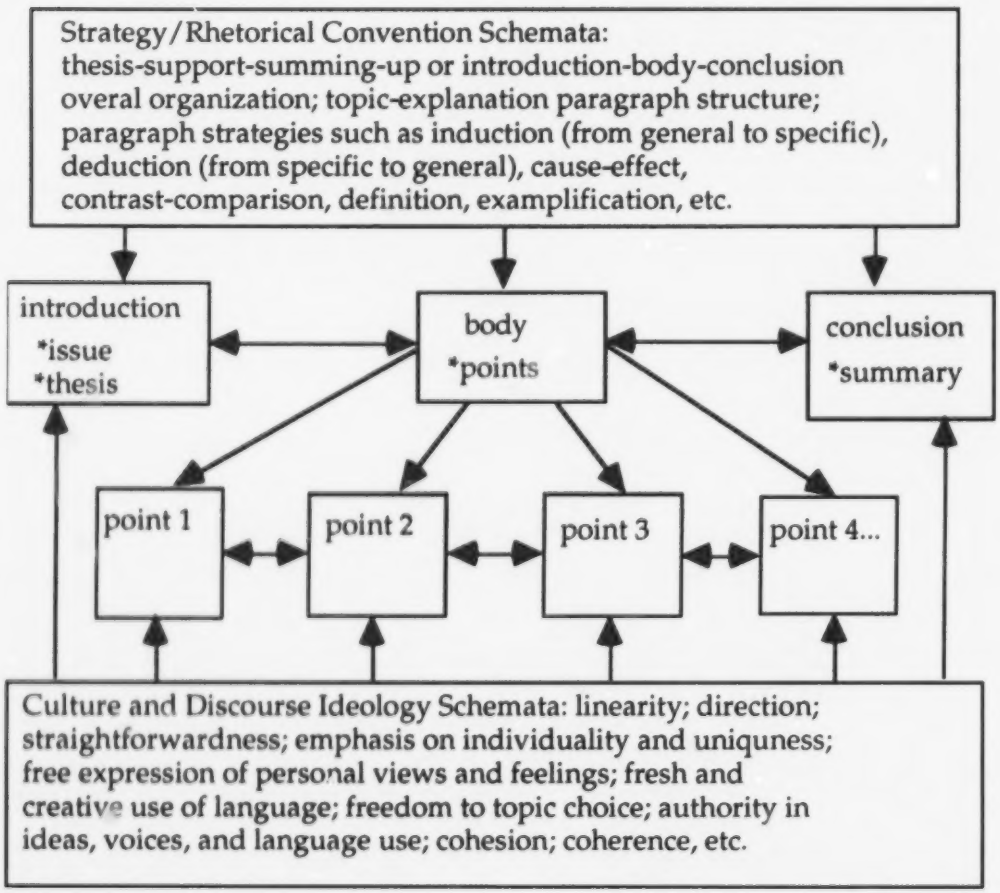
> of 25 get a chance to take a nationwide examination. The competition is intense. Only 7-12 percent can be admitted and their records must be above a certain level. (2) *Competition encourages the young to study, increases their passion and interest in science and brings result and victory of the stronger.* but it is also tragic for the weaker. A young girl who had a strong sense of self-respect failed 3 times in competition. She was so depressed and shamed that she committed suicide by drinking DDT.
>
> This is the case. Though the competition brings about some deleterious effects, I am afraid the situation will not be changed for the time being. (3)*Our country suffered a lot during the ten-year cultural revolution and now we're supply the lack. Thus high advanced technology requires skilled and expert men,* and yet a large population surely makes the competition tight. Not merely through college education, however, one can make achievement. There are many other ways of making contribution. There may also be competitions at very trade and profession. (4)*Where exist human beings, competition exists.* (5)*But as everybody knows, "where there is a will, there is a way."* (6) *The enemy of success is self-abandonment.* I really hope that the weaker will become stronger. And (7) *I believe with the development of the society, time will finally make up the abuse.* (Matalene 799-800)

To this Chinese ESL student writer, using the accepted expressions, such as (1), (2), (3), (4), (6), (7), and (8) in the above passage, and fixed phrases such as (5), means displaying to the reader acceptance of those particular expressions, reporting their understanding of and agreement with the guiding ideology, and showing willingness to belong to that particular discourse community and sharing its collective values. But when the writer applies this strategy in his or her English composition, it is simply perceived as over-dependence on clichés and an indifference to new, individually-based thought and expression. The profound cross-linguistic failure of the writer's intent leads to undeserved negative stereotypes of Chinese writers, which have found their way into the literature. In Matalene's words: "For Chinese students, style means manipulating one's memory bank of phrases, arrangement means filling the form, and invention means doing it the way it has been done" (794).

Implications for ClassroomTeaching

The principal pedagogical implication of the this study is that discourse ideologies of the target language need to be taught in very much the same way that discourse strategies need to be taught. In the case of teaching English composition to Chinese ESL students, writing teachers should teach them not only the English rhetorical conventions and writing skills but also the English cultural and sociopolitical values and beliefs and disciplinary ideologies pertaining to academic discourse. To borrow Land and Whitley's terms, these students need to be taught to "share and reproduce in their writing our [English] world view, one to which they are, of course, alien" (289).

Table 1: Schemata Categories of An English Expository Essay



Practically speaking (as shown in Table 1), if teachers want Chinese ESL students to organize their English compositions along the "Introduction-Body-Conclusion" three-part pattern, the students should be explicitly taught that this pattern represents an implicit agreement between the writer and the reader in the English language; that the writer follows this pattern to fulfill the reader's expectations; and that English culture and academic discourse endorse linearity over other thought patterns. Similarly, if teachers want Chinese ESL students to "Be original" or "Be yourself" in their writing, these students should be taught that individuality is encouraged and appreciated in English culture and that free expression of personal views and thinking is essential in English academic writing. By the same token, Chinese ESL students should be assured that although a direct, straightforward approach to a topic may give their readers the impression of "imposing," it will eventually promote intellectual understanding and thinking. Only such explicit teaching of English discourse ideologies can produce change in the use of discourse strategies in Chinese ESL students' writing because change in language use comes from change in guiding ideologies and discourse expectations. In other words, only when Chinese ESL students have the needed schemata shared by English academic discourse community are they able to compose effectively in English.

To achieve this goal, ESL writing teachers first need to be aware of contrastive rhetoric and intstill this awareness to the students. This awareness will enable teachers to easily realize that Chinese students have culturally conditioned schematic knowledge about the task if they choose the four-part organiztion format to write an expository essay while native speakers of English follow the three-part pattern; teachers will also be able to realize that the way Chinese students choose to structure an expository essay reflects the guiding discourse ideology in Chinese culture and students' experiences within it. Moreover, this awareness will keep teachers reminded not to see Chinese ESL students, "even those in 'regular' college writing classes, [who] have not learned to use the organization patterns of U. S. academic prose" as "'bad' writers" (Land and Whitley 288).

Second, teachers need to teach Chinese students the English discursive and socio-cultural ideologies through an on-going WRITING process and also

evaluate their writing in the same process. Teaching ESL writing will benefit teachers and students in two ways. On the one hand, this process will allow teachers to use many constructive activities, such as learnign logs, peer-response, conferences, and multiple-draft assignments, which will offer students opportunities to have more experience with English culture in general and academic discourse in particular. On the other hand, in this process teachers will help students to build up their new fundations for English academic discourse. For example, unlimited writing will activate students' existing knowledge for an English expository essay. At this point, teachers can help students to identify those rhetorical strategies and relevant guiding ideologies gained from their experiences in their native culture; also they can help students modify and make these strategies and ideologies more in tune with their experiences in English culture. After all, teachers can help students get to know new discourse strategies and ideologies which are necessary for them to compose in English.

Appendix

Example #1: The Eight-Legged Essay

[*1. poti, tthe opening-up*] A sage regards Heaven, Earth, and everything in between as one grand unity and regards all men under Heaven, whether they be far or near, as his own brothers. He wishes to feed them, educate them, and make them secure since in his view he and all other men spring from the same origin.

[*2. chengti, the amplification*] Basically no difference exists between a sage's mind and the minds of all others; in theory, every man can become a sage. The difference lies in the fact that while an ordinary person places the individual "I" above the collective "we," thus confusing the important with the comparatively insignificant and, furthermore, blocking the communication between the individual "I" and the collective "we," a sage does exactly the opposite. In the case of an ordinary person the situation has sometimes so deteriorated that he regards his enemies not only unrelated persons but his own parents, brothers, and sisters as well. Nothing can be deplorable than this! Deeply concerned, the sages teach us the principle of grand unity: that all the things in the universe, including human beings, are manifestations of a single, inseparable organ that all the force that holds this unity together is love (*jen*). They want us to be more strict with ourselves and more generous toward others.

[*3. qijiang, the prelimilary exposition*] This principle of grand unity is by no means purely academic; during the time of Yao Shun, and the Three Dynasties people actually lived by it. Those who lived by it were called sages or virtuous men, and those who did not were referred to as scoundrels, no matter how learned they were. All the people-from scholars to farmers, artisans, and merchants-had been taught this principle at home and in schools and guided their conduct in accordance with it. They did not occupy themselves with ideologies or literature, let alone the pursuit of fame, power, or wealth. They primary concern was how they could best serve as dutiful sons to their parents, respectful juniors to their elders, and trustworthy friends to all others. They served well because their conduct and behavior were natural and spontaneous, as their bodies and minds were united in this matter. Furthermore, it never occurred to them that they would not do their best to serve others. In their view the capacity to love was inherent in all men; it was merely a matter to simple put it into practice.

[*4. qigu, the first argument*] Now let examine what their schools taught. The basic discipline that formed the foundation of all curricula was the cultivation of virtue, and all the specialization, whatever they happened to be (rites and music, government and education,

agriculture, irrigation and water control, etc.), were developed in accordance with the students' natural inclinations and talents. The purpose of this education was to create a morally superior man with a special skill of his own choice. Since his personal ethics would never be in doubt and since his occupation corresponded to his natural talent and special skill, he would be happy and content with the same position for the rest of his life. Believing firmly in the principle of grand unity as described above, he did not regard his position as either superior or inferior, leisurely or burdensome, as long as he could best serve others. Whenever in the position to hire the service of others, he concerned their ability and their special skill the only criteria, since he had no doubt about other people's ethics as they had no doubt about his. There were no such thins as noble tasks or menial jobs, as they were all equal in importance. All of this was possible because all people regarded each other as members of one family, working diligently to bring benefit to all. Those unusually talented and able were entrusted with the duty of government, while all others served as farmers, artisans, and merchants. None aspired to a position other than the one he already had, since no position was higher or lower than any other one. It was a simple matter of division of labor.

[5. *xugu, the second argument*] Looking back at this golden era, today's scholars regret deeply that the way of our ancient sages us no longer with us and spend much of their time tracing the good customs and sound institutions of the past and try to put together whatever fragments still remain. They desire our praise since they want to restore the way of our ancient sages. Unfortunately, the way of the sages was replaced by the way of the power brokers for such a long time that these scholars, however wise, tend to be influenced by the latter rather than the former and that, despite their sincerity insofar as the restoration of ancient institutions is concerned, actually strengthens the argument of the power brokers.

[6. *zhonggu, the sthrid argument*] At the moment these scholars keep themselves busy as commentators on Confucius classics, as memorizes of ancient literature, and as writers of a variety of forms of poetry. This is the way they seek fame; this is the way they seek beauty. In each of their so-called disciplines there were several schools, each of which competes with others for recognition and influence. Each school is like a maze, or better still, an amusement park, where some jump and run, while others laugh and flirt with one another. Each person tries to impress others as to how important or, really, how "cute" he is. It is no wonder that those who spend their lifetime in this never-never land have lost the right sense of values and, in many cases, become totally neurotic and irresponsible.

[7. *hougu, the final argument*] As the way of the sages slowly disappears in the distance, we become more and more used to the concept of power and wealth. Many of us have been influenced

by Buddhism and Taoism, but Buddhist and Taoist teachings have in no way reduced our yearning for power and wealth. Prominent scholars have warned us against the evil consequences of this worldly obsession, but these warnings have unfortunately fallen upon deaf ears. For several thousand years power and wealth have been the primary goals for nations and individuals-long enough to enable their poison to seep deep into the marrow of our bones. To seek power and wealth, people fight among themselves to become more influential, more famous, and to acquire greater ability to push other people around. A clerk would like to have a division of soldiers under his command or to decide other people's fate by becoming a criminal judge. A magistrate wishes to become a governor, a governor wishes to become a governor-general, and there is no limit.

[*8. dajie, the conclusion*] To justify their claims, people need eloquence and sophistry which they devote much of their lifetime to acquiring. Reading extensively and memorizing a great deal, they want to impress others with how much they know. They use this knowledge to cover their own misdeeds and to make plausible what cannot be justified. They write well, and the richness of their rhetoric is aimed to deceive rather than to reveal. When you ask them about their life goal, they reply without hesitation that they want to serve the people. They realize that had they told the truth, they would not be able so easily to serve their own selfish ends. With this kind of attitude to pursue this kind of learning, is it really surprising that they find themselves at odds with the sages of ancient times.

Yuan, Yen. "On Learning." Essays from Late Qing Dynasty." Beijing, PRC: Commerce Publishing, LTD, 1978.

Example #2: The Four-Part Essay

[*1. qi, the introduction*] In China's cities the aged who were supported by their families are receiving more and more social welfare benefits. The tradition of respecting the elderly is still a trend.

[*2. cheng, the elucidation of the topic*] This was a conclusion of a research group that surveyed 7,000 people aged sixty or more for a key state sociological project. The survey covered 278 subjects including basic conditions, family life, employment, financial situation, medical care, and social services, legislature and rights for the old, etc. The citizens investigated were chosen from Beijing, Wuhan, Chengdu, Guiyang, Xian, and Lanzhou. The survey indicated that the majority of the elderly live in harmony with their family members and 83% of senior citizens queried thought their offsprings demonstrate either "respect" or "considerable respect" towards them.

[3. *jun, the transition to another seemingly unrelated topic*] The old people play an significant role in the family life shown by the fact that 86.7% stated that they have a say in affairs related to the expenditure, and the marriage and the employment of their children. The elderly also keep in close contact with their children.

[4. *he, the summing-up*] As to social attitudes, 52.7% of the surveyed think that the aged are well respected.

"Respect for the Aged." People's Daily Overseas Edition." 23/12 (1989): 34.

Example #3: The Three-Foot Monster Essay

[*1. the generalization*] Firmly carrying out Chairman Mao's policy of "grasping revolution and promoting production," the revolutionary workers and staff of China's railways have brought about an excellent situation in both revolution and production in the national rail system. Today, either revolutionary committees or revolutionary leading groups have been established in the vast majority of railway bureaus and sub-bureaus, railway stations and engineering sections. Revolutionary mass criticism is still full of swing. Mao Tse-tung's thought study classes are being well run. This has led to victories in both revolution and production.

[2. *the elaboration*] Many stations and sections of the Peking railway Bureau, pivot of the national railway railways, have month after month overfulfilled the state transport plans. In certain targets they have surpassed the highest records of the past. Daily freight wagon loadings, the main index reflecting railway transport efficiency, have been rising steadily. Compared with the first quarter of 1972, it increased by 21 percent in April; and in the first ten days of May it rose by another 6 percent over the April figure.

The lines under the Shanghai Railway Bureau link up A number of China's important industrial and mining districts and industrial cities. Its railways workers, with a deep understanding of the important duties they shoulder, do their utmost in giving priority to deliveries of coal, timber, oil, iron and steel, grain, and other materials important for the national economy.

[3. *the speculation*] "Sailing the seas depends on the helmsman, making revolution depends on Mao Tse-tung's thought." During the great proletarian cultural revolution in the past several years, the revolutionary railway workers and staff put the creative study and application of Mao Tse-tung's thought above all else. Offices, stations, workshops, shifts or groups, and dormitories and households of the workers and staff have all become the classes for the study

of Chairman's works. Resolutely putting Mao Tse-tung's thought in command in the railway transport and production, they are ensuring that railway transport advances along the revolutionary road pointed out by Chairman Mao.

"Excellent Situation on Railways in Revolution and Production." Peking Review. *20 (1972): 28.*

Example #4: A qi-cheng-jun-he Essay by a Chinese ESL Student

[*qi, the introduction*] "We are dependent, for understanding and for consolation and hope, upon what we learn of ourselves from songs and stories." From this statement, we can know that through songs and stories, people realize themselves, humanity, and their societies. The literacy--the mastery of language and the knowledge of books--is the essential factor that enlarges people's knowledge, and improves mutual realization of people, and then creates the smooth society. From kindergartens to colleges, from homes to offices, we learn how to interact with someone and how to realize ourselves and our societies. The literacy helps us to accustom and realize them. Hence, "literacy is not an ornament, but a necessity."

[*cheng, the accepting of the topic*] In most countries, the instruction in literacy begins to teach how to tell the alphabets in the kindergarten. Then, in elementary school, teachers teach us how to pronounce well and write words, composition, and some simple article. Continuously, in high school, we learn to read the novel and literal master pieces. Moreover, in college, we should analyze the article and the knowledge of books. Like other most countries, the instruction of literacy in my country is step by step. When we are equipped with some fundamental knowledge, we will be taught more difficult knowledge. Before high school, we learn how to communicate with others correctly and fluently. but in the college, we more emphasize the formal, correct written Chinese which is not influenced by the illiteracy--the personal style or society-style Chinese. We know something of roots and resources of Chinese. Instead of focusing on the short-term practicality, we emphasize the long-term worth.

[*jun, the transition to another seemingly unrelated topic*] In my educational experience, I appreciated what my English teachers taught me in the United States. Since my English is not my first language, I am not familiar with the English literature. Maybe I can speak and write English, but I have no idea about the resource of English and the meaning of roots and so on.

[*he, the summing-up*] Everyone needs language, and also everyone needs to know language. The literacy is not an ornament but a necessity. From our birth until death, language always follows us. It is very practical in our daily life. We must know a better language. We must speak, and teach our children to speak a language precise and articulate and lively enough to tell the

truth about the world as we know it. We hope we can create more smooth and more harmonious society by knowing each others more.

Works Cited

Berlin, James. "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class." College English, 50 (1988): 477-494.

Eagleton, Terry. Ideology: An Introduction. New York: Verso, 1991.

Fagan, Edward R. and Peggy Cheong. "Contrastive Rhetoric; Pedagogical Implications foe the ESL Teacher in Singapore." RELC: A Journal of Language Teaching and Research in Southeast Asia, 18/1 (June 1987): 19-31.

Gentzler, Mason (ed). Changing China: Readings in the History of China from the Opium War to the Present. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977.

Gregg, Joan. "Comments on 'Academic Writing and Chinese Students: Transfer and Developmental Factors'." TESOL Quarterly, 18/3 (1987): 354-58.

Kaplan, Robert B. "Contrastive Grammar: Teaching Composition to the Chinese Students." Journal of English as a Second Language, 3 (1968): 1-13.

Kaplan, Robert B. "Contrastive Grammar: Teaching Composition to the Chinese Students." Journal of English as a Second Language, 3 (1968): 1-13.

Kaplan, Robert B. "Contrastive Rhetoric and Second Language Learning: Notes Toward a Theory of Contrastive Rhetoric." Writing Across Languages and Cultures: Issues in Contrastive Rhetoric. Ed. Allan C. Purves. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1988. 275-304.

Kaplan, Robert. B. "Cultural Thought Patterns in Inter-cultural Education." Language Learning 17/1-2 (1966): 1-20.

Kuang, Jianxian. "Rhyme-Prose and Eight-Legged Essay." Literature, History, and Philosophy, 5 (1991): 68-74.

Land, Robert E., Jr. and Catherine Whitley. "Evaluating Second Language Essays in Regular Composition Classes: Toward a Pluralistic U. S. Rhetoric." Richness in Writing: Empowering ESL Students Eds.

Johnson, Donna M. and Duane H. Roen. New York: Longman, 1989. 284-293.

LeFevre, Karen. Invention as a Social Act. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1987.

Mao, Zedong. "Oppose Stereotyped Party Writing." Selected Works of Mao Tsetung. Ed. Foreign Language Press. Beijing, PRC: People's Publishing House, 1967. 55-68.

Mao, Zedong. "Let a Hundred Flowers Blossom, Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend" Selected Works of Mao Tsetung. Ed. Foreign Language Press. Beijing, PRC: People's Publishing House, 1967. 408-21.

Matalene, Carolyn. "Contrastive Rhetoric: An American Writing Teacher in China." College English 47(8) (Dec., 1985): 789-808.

Oliver, Robert T. Culture and Communication. Springfield, IL: Charles & Thomas, 1962.

Saville-Troike, Muriel. The Ethnography of Communication: An Introduction. New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989.

Shen Fan. "The Classroom and the Wider Culture: Identity as a Key to Learning English Composition." College Composition and Communication 40(4) (Dec., 1989): 459-66.

Tsao, Feng-fu. "Linguistics and Writeen Discourse in Particular Languages: Contrastive Studies: English and Chinese(Mandarin)." Annual Review of Applied Linguistics. 11 (1990): 99-117.

Wang, Chun. A Miscellany on Composition. Beijing, PRC: The Worker Publishers & Co., 1950.

Zhang, Yiping. Lectures on Composition. Shanghai, PRC: Beixian Publishing House, 1938.